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INFORMATION REPORT

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COUNTRY China

SUBJECT Chinese Communist Government Policy
Toward Kwangtung Bandit Leaders

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1. Certain village communities in the Pearl River Delta, Kwangtung Province, have been controlled for centuries by local landlords in combination with bandit and pirate gangs. In this arrangement, the landlords provided bases and support for the gangs, and the latter acted as a private police force and rent collection agency for the landlords.

2. On Honan Island, near Canton, such communities have been numerous. Here the gangs have been organized into a loose confederation. * This organization resisted attempts by both the Kuomintang and the Japanese to destroy it.

3. Shortly after the Chinese Communists occupied Canton, Communist troops and political workers went to Honan Island and demanded all arms in the possession of private individuals.** The gangs buried their serviceable weapons and turned in only useless equipment. The troops then left, at political cadres remained behind to carry on propaganda, organizational and intelligence work. In mid-December 1949 troop detachments returned to the villages on Honan Island. Public meetings were held, and tenant farmers whose confidence had been won by the Communist political workers denounced some of the gang leaders. The lands held by the local landlords who had cooperated with the gangs were expropriated, and certain of the gang leaders were placed under arrest on the understanding that they would be released when their followers produced more arms. About seventy percent of the hidden weapons were turned over to the authorities, who released the leaders. Their followers, however, since the leaders can no longer support them, are drifting away or turning to farming for a livelihood. They are employed on the expropriated lands formerly owned by the landlords. These lands are being organized into experimental collective farms. The former tenant farmers would prefer to own their lands outright and are not satisfied, but regard themselves as better off than in the past since they no longer suffer from the landlords' exactions.

** See paragraphs 1 and 2 of

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